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Source: *The Journal of African History*, 1971, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1971), pp. 185-213

Published by: Cambridge University Press

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FIREARMS AND WARFARE ON THE GOLD AND SLAVE COASTS FROM THE SIXTEENTH TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURIES

BY R. A. KEA

1. *The Introduction and Spread of Firearms*

ACCORDING to Egharevba, firearms arrived in the Benin Kingdom in the latter part of the fifteenth century, and they were first employed in Benin campaigns during the reign of Oba Esigie.¹ Another writer states that 'the Ekiti had encountered firearms as early as the sixteenth century, when Benin soldiers, armed with guns, supported the Ikerre in a war against the Ado'.² The view that Benin military prowess in the sixteenth century derived from a monopoly in the use of firearms is current in several publications; however, the role of guns in sixteenth century Benin military history has been overestimated, for although some Portuguese arquebusiers accompanied Benin armies on expeditions and assisted the Benin rulers in their military affairs, the Benin troops did not possess the new weapons.³

The Obas of Benin made concerted efforts to obtain guns, presumably because of their assumed effectiveness in warfare. They had seen firearms in the hands of the Portuguese, and had probably heard that guns were supplied to the King of the Kongo.⁴ In 1514 Oba Esigie sent envoys to Portugal who requested firearms, among other things apparently because the Benin Kingdom at this time was hard pressed by hostile armies, and guns, it was believed, would give the Oba 'a decided military advantage'.⁵

Abbreviations:

OWIC	Old West India Company
WIC	Second West India Company
NBKG	Nederlandsche Bezittingen ter Kust van Guinea
VVWIS	Verzameling Verspreide West-Indische Stukken
AMK	Archief van het Ministerie van Kolonien, 1814-49.
NA	Notariël Archieven (Gemeente Archief, Amsterdam)
RAC	Royal African Company, London
CO	Colonial Office
T	Treasury Records
FO	Foreign Office
GNQ	Ghana Notes and Queries

¹ J. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin* (Ibadan Univ. Press, 1960, 3rd ed.), 27, 30.

² R. S. Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (London, 1969), 124, and also 58-9.

³ A. A. B. Aderibigbe, 'Peoples of Southern Nigeria' in *A Thousand Years of West African History*, eds. J. F. Ade Ajayi and I. Espie (Ibadan Univ. Press, 1969 rev. ed.) 199; J. E. Flint, *Nigeria and Ghana* (Prentice-Hall, 1966), 81; A. F. C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897* (Longmans, 1969), 49 and note 3. See note 9 below.

⁴ Ryder, *op. cit.* 46.

⁵ *Ibid.*

In the same year the Benin sovereign ordered the seizure of a cannon from a Portuguese caravel trading at Benin, doubtless a demonstration of his determination to acquire firearms, as well as an indication of the friction that existed between the Portuguese traders and missionaries on the one hand and the Oba on the other.⁶

Officially, the Portuguese were forbidden to sell firearms to non-Christians, ostensibly on politico-religious grounds,⁷ but more credibly because, during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Portugal was largely dependent on Flemish and German gunsmiths for its supply of firearms.⁸ Moreover, the failure of Portuguese missions in the early sixteenth century determined the Portuguese not to supply the Oba with firearms; indeed they took stringent precautions to prevent gun smuggling from places like São Tomé and the seizure of weapons from vessels lying in the Benin rivers.⁹ The Portuguese are reported to have burnt at the stake a Spanish interloper, who was presumably trading at Benin, 'after charging him with heresy, more specifically with selling arms to the unbelievers'.¹⁰ On the whole, the Portuguese measures were successful, so the extensive campaigns of the Benin armies in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries owed nothing to the use of firearms.¹¹ Thus in the late seventeenth century Barbot wrote that the people of Benin were 'no great lovers of firearms and consequently not well skilled in the use of them . . .'.¹² The trade in firearms to Benin seems to have begun on a large scale only in the early eighteenth century.¹³

West of the Benin kingdom, however, the firearms situation was different. The Portuguese maintained several fortified trading stations on the Gold Coast—at Elmina, Shama, Axim, and, until c. 1578, Accra—and to protect these from European rivals and the hostile intentions of local rulers they found it necessary to arm those dwelling in the vicinity of their forts with firearms.¹⁴ The Portuguese maintained groups of their

⁶ Ryder, op. cit. 43.

⁷ A. F. C. Ryder, 'The Benin Mission', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 1, 2 (1960), 233, 234–5, 234 n. 1; C. R. Boxer, *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion, 1415–1825* (Johannesburg, 1961), 7–8.

⁸ J. Streider, 'Negerkunst von Benin und Deutsches Metallexportgewerbe im 15 und 16 Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Heft 4/6 (Berlin, 1933), 259; C. M. Cipolla, *Guns, Sails and Empires* (Minerva Press, 1965), 26, 31 and footnotes 2, 3 and 4, 32 and note 3 above.

⁹ Ryder (1969), op. cit. 52. In the 1530s small quantities of firearms were smuggled into Benin from São Tomé. Ibid. 68.

¹⁰ L. Sundström, *The Trade of Guinea* (Lund, 1965), 55.

¹¹ Ryder, op. cit. 52. D. Ruiters (1623) does not list firearms among the Dutch imports into Benin nor does he refer to them when describing the wars of that kingdom. D. Ruiters, *Toortse der Zee-Vaert* (1623); Uitgegeven door S. P. L'Honoré Naber ('S-Gravenhage, 1913), 76, 78–9.

¹² J. Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea* (London, 1746), 357–8, 361.

¹³ Ryder, op. cit. 148–9, 150, 199. See note 18 below.

¹⁴ Cf. 'The Second Voyage to Guinea set out by Sir G. Barne, Sir J. Yorke [*et. al.*] in the year 1554' in R. Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* 8 vols (London and Toronto), IV, 52; *Europeans in West Africa 1450–1560*. Trans. and ed. J. W. Blake, 2 vols (London, 1942), I, 45, 51; 'Wm.

principal allies, the Elminas, in various places along the Gold Coast—Boutry, Sekondi, Shama, Anomabu, Adia, Apam and Accra—in order to protect their trading monopoly.¹⁵ De Marees reported that the Portuguese sold guns to the Elminas, who knew how to use them, and who understood that a long musket had a greater range than a short one.¹⁶

The Dutch began trading on the Gold Coast in 1591 or 1592, and firearms formed a part of their ships' cargoes. In 1594 the ship *De Goede Hoop* conveyed an unspecified number of muskets to the Gold Coast, and the following year another ship carried *inter alia* '25 musketten ende roers'.¹⁷ Between 1593 and 1607 more than 200 Dutch ships visited the Gold Coast,¹⁸ and many of them probably carried guns. De Marees stated that in 1601 the Dutch were not only selling guns at various places on the Gold Coast, but were also teaching the local people how to use them.¹⁹ A few firearms may have reached the Gold Coast interior at this time. De Marees refers to traders who came from places 200 miles inland to trade on the coast.²⁰ Nevertheless, the number of guns sold by the Dutch

Towerson's First Voyage to Guinea 1555–56' in *ibid.* II, 385, and 'The Second Voyage to Guinea and the River Sestos by Mr. Baker in 1563' in J. Astley, *A New and General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, 4 vols (London, 1745–7), I, 182. Also K. Ratelband, 'West-Afrika'. Overdruk uit *Nederland in de Vijf Werelddeelen* (Leiden, 1947), 253.

¹⁵ Bijlage VIII, 'Vertoog of Deductie, opgesteld voor de Staten-Generaal der Vereen. Nederlanden, door den Directeur-Generaal van de Nederlandsche Bezittingen ter Kuste van Guinea, J. Valckenburg . . . Anno 1656' in J. K. J. de Jonge, *De Oorsprong van Nederlands Bezittingen op de Kust van Guinea* ('S-Gravenhage, 1871), 53, 57, 67. Cf. Ruiters, *op. cit.* 72, 73 and H. Herman, 'Onze besittingen op de Kust van Guinea en de Krygsverrichtingen aldaar, 1598 tot 1872', *Eerste Deel* 1598 tot 1816. Aanwinsten no. xii, 1 (Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague) (Jaar, 1925), 22–3. I wish to thank Mr A. van Dantzig of the University of Ghana for drawing my attention to this work.

¹⁶ P. de Marees, *Beschryvinghe ende Historische Verhael van het Gout Koninckrijk van Guinea anders de Gout-Custe de Mina genaemt liggende in het deel van Africa*; Uitgegeven door S. P. L'Honoré Naber ('S-Gravenhage, 1912), 95–96.

¹⁷ 'T Cargasoen ofte coopmanschappen, geladen in tboot, genaemt *De Goede Hoop*, nae de costen van Guinea' and 'Reeckeninge van A. Adriaensz tot Schiedam van Uytredinge met sijn ladinge op Guinea' in H. E. van Gelder, 'Scheepsrekeningen van Enkele der Vroegste Guinea-Vaarten', *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek*, Tweede Deel, 'S-Gravenhage (1918), 246, 249. The 'musketten' were probably matchlock muskets, and the 'roers' snaphaunce muskets. The snaphaunce was a prototype of the later flintlock musket. See note 84 below. Sundström, *op. cit.* 199 states that in the late sixteenth century guns were exported from Liège via Antwerp to Africa, however both matchlock and snaphaunce muskets were made in the Netherlands at this time. See J. F. Hayward, *The Art of the Gunmaker*, 2 vols (London, 1962–63), 35, 127, 134.

¹⁸ Van Gelder, *op. cit.* 239. Also W. S. Unger, 'Nieuwe gegens betreffende het begin der vaart op Guinea', *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek*. Een en Twintigste Deel ('S-Gravenhage, 1940). In 1598 two yachts (*jachten*) visited 'a city which they say is as large as Antwerp, called Benayn (Benin)', and it is possible that a small number of firearms were sold there at this time. *Ibid.* 205.

¹⁹ De Marees, *ibid.* French vessels traded regularly on the Gold Coast in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and it is possible that French traders were another source of firearms. *Ibid.* 87, 88 and *Reizen naar West-Afrika van Pieter van den Broecke 1605–1614* Uitgegeven door K. Ratelband ('S-Gravenhage, 1950), 23.

²⁰ De Marees, *op. cit.* 49.

must have been small,²¹ and consequently their distribution was probably limited to the coastal districts where the Dutch sought to find allies in their attempts to break the Portuguese monopoly.²²

Subsequent reports, however, do not refer to this traffic in firearms,²³ suggesting either that guns were no longer sold on the Gold Coast, or that they formed such a negligible proportion of the total trade that they were omitted from the invoices of trade commodities. Even so guns continued to circulate on the Gold Coast in small quantities before the tremendous expansion of the firearms trade in the second half of the seventeenth century. This was possible because of the intense, and often hostile, competition between the representatives of the various European trading companies.

The concentration of Dutch, English, Swedish, Danish and Brandenburg commercial establishments on the Gold Coast in the course of the seventeenth century obliged each trading power to maintain a strong and capable military position in order to protect its mercantile operations and, if possible, to expand them at the expense of its rivals. To achieve these objectives, each power formed alliances with the rulers of the coastal and hinterland states, for although the forts were generally well-built and well-equipped with weapons, they were, on the whole, poorly garrisoned. Thus it was necessary to engage the local peoples as auxiliary troops.²⁴

There are several references to Dutch involvement in local political and military conflicts on the Gold Coast. About 1613 the king of Great Accra requested Dutch military assistance against his enemies, so 20 to 25 Dutch musketeers accompanied 1,000 Accras in an attack on Etsi, an inland state behind the coastal Fante and Asebu, and the Etsi were soundly defeated.²⁵ Again, in 1618, 30 Dutch musketeers together with 300 Asebu

²¹ Thus in 1603 the personal weapons of a crew of eight on a Dutch ship of 40 to 50 *last* were four muskets, eight long and twelve short pikes; a crew of 25 aboard a ship of 140 to 200 *last* carried 16 muskets, two dozen long and three dozen short pikes. Herman, *op. cit.*, 15.

²² On Dutch-Portuguese enmity in the early seventeenth century see Bijlage II, 'Verhoog van de remonstrantie van de Bewindehebbbers der verschillen-de Compagnien, handelende op de Kust van Guinea, aan de Staten-Generaal overgeleverd . . . 1609-1611' in de Jonge, *op. cit.* 36 ff. and no. 96 'Carta de D. Cristovão de Melo a El-Rei (5-2-1607)' in A. Brasio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana* (Lisboa, 1955), vol. 5, 249-51. Barbot, *op. cit.* 164, says that the Dutch supplied the Fetu and Kommenda with arms to encourage them to rise against the Portuguese. See also de Marees, *op. cit.* 218-19, 226.

²³ N.A. 375, fol. 262, 28 May 1612 and N. A. 645 A, fols. 29-30, 28 July 1617; 'Consideration van Handelaars over het belang van den Handel op de Kust van Guinea (1608?)'; *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap, Gevestigd te Utrecht*, Zeven en Twintigste Jaargang. Zesde Serie, Tweede Deel (Utrecht, 1872), 262; Ruiters, *op. cit.* 72; S. Brun, *Schiffarten* (1624). Uitgegeven door S. P. L'Honoré Naber ('S-Gravenhage, 1913), 26, 28.

²⁴ Herman, *op. cit.* 25-6, 63; Ratelband, *op. cit.* 260. See also OWIC 2, 'Secrete Notulen van de Vergadering van XIX . . .' (March?) 1632, and Beilage 6, 'Accord en Verbond aangegaan tusschen den Ed. Heer Directeur-Generaal (en) Tekki Addico, Coning van Groot en Klijn Comman' [4 Oct. 1704] in J. G. Doorman, 'Die Nederlândisch West-Indische Compagnie an der Gold-Küste', *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, Deel XL (Batavia and 'S-Hage, 1898), 487-9.

²⁵ Brun, *op. cit.* 28-9. The Accra king paid each musketeer two Benda (c. £16).

fought against the Kormantine, and after a two hour battle 300 of the latter were killed.²⁶ A report of 1629 relates that the king of Asebu borrowed 60 or 70 muskets and two small 'gotelingen' (cannon used aboard ships and in forts) when the Etsi invaded Asebu, and, it was said, these weapons 'have much helped, as some of them know very well how to use them'.²⁷ This probably marks the period when local musketeers, and not Dutch (or other European) gunmen were first used in war. In 1633 the Asebu requested and received gunpowder, lead 'and other munitions' from the Dutch governor at Fort Nassau when it was reported that the Etsi, who were preparing an attack on Asebu, were receiving firearms from the Portuguese, and in the same year the army of the Fetu (Afutu) kingdom, equipped with 'many muskets' (supplied by the Portuguese?) defeated the forces of Kommenda.²⁸ In 1640 the Dutch Director-General supplied his allies at Kormantine with 24 muskets in order to drive away English traders from that place.²⁹

From the 1610s until the 1650s the Dutch did not sell guns on the Gold Coast, for the gunpowder, firearms and other munitions of war which they distributed to their allies are not listed in the trade invoices of the period (*Coopmanschap factura*), but were evidently weapons to be used solely in defence of the Dutch trading establishments (*Ammonitie van oorloge*). Thus in the mid-1640s and the 1650s the latter included muskets, blunderbusses, matches, powder, 'roers', pikes, half-pikes, halberds, pistols, musketballs, etc., while munitions of war were not itemized in merchandise intended for sale.³⁰

Although the Dutch did not sell guns on the Gold Coast, English traders did. In 1646 they sold an unspecified quantity of muskets and gunpowder along the Gold Coast, but principally to Abrambu, an inland state opposed to Great Kommenda and Fetu, two polities associated with Dutch commercial interests.³¹ The rulers of these two kingdoms requested and received from the Dutch Director-General at Elmina, gunpowder and lead for musket balls in order to protect themselves from Abrambu.³² Evidently, they already possessed muskets. The *Braffo* (or chief military officer) of Fetu had, in 1647, at least twenty-four men

²⁶ Brun, *op. cit.* 63.

²⁷ 'An Annotated Dutch Map of 1629', *GNQ*, no. 9 (1966), 15. Also O. Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique* (Amsterdam, 1686), 284.

²⁸ OWIC 11. De Gouverneur opt Fort Nassaw, 3 Feb. 1634. The Portuguese were relatively well-supplied with firearms. In 1635 their arsenal at São Jorge da Mina had *inter alia* 100 matchlock muskets and 100 arquebuses. See no. 81 'Carta a El-Rei sobre a Mina (10-3-1635)' in Brasio (1960), *op. cit.* VIII, 319.

²⁹ OWIC 13. 'Register op de Contracten en Accorden van wegens de Edele Generaale WIC gemaakt met de Naturellen . . .', entry for 18 July 1640.

³⁰ *Vijf Dagregisters van Het Kasteel São Jorge da Mina (Elmina) aan de Goudkust (1645-1647)*. Uitgegeven door K. Ratelband ('S-Gravenhage, 1953), 361-83, 385-6, 388-93; 'Journaal gehouden by my Louys Dammaert uitgevaren met 't Schip Prins Willem . . .', entry for 7 Jan. 1655. Aanwinsten, no. xxii (1898), Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague; N.A. 3589, fol. 363, 15 Sept. 1671. See also note 23 above.

³¹ *Vijf Dagregisters* . . . *op. cit.* 224, 226, 260. ³² *Ibid.* 224, 225, 226, 260, and also 174.

equipped with guns, and in October 1652, at a meeting with the Dutch and 'Accanists', the Fetu king assembled 3-400 men with muskets.³³

English traders not only sold guns to any local merchant prepared to buy them, but on occasion they presented them as gifts. They gave two pounds of gold, 30 muskets, and some gunpowder to the caboceers of Fetu in order to obtain permission to build a lodge at Cape Coast.³⁴ The Dutch on the other hand, continued to supply firearms, powder, etc. only to the rulers with whom they had commercial and military agreements.³⁵ The Elminas appear to have been well-supplied with guns, and served the Dutch as an auxiliary musketeer force with military and police duties.³⁶

Firearms were probably carried into the forest states at this time. In 1646 when English traders were selling gunpowder and 'many muskets', 'Akany' merchants carried on a lively trade with them, and these merchants may, in fact, have taken guns into the interior.³⁷ In the same year 'Akany' joined Fetu against Great Kommenda. Both of the latter states had small quantities of firearms, and presumably 'Akany' had them as well.³⁸ Moreover, Abrambu was a tributary of 'Akany', and in 1646, the Abrambu were considered brave soldiers with muskets and powder.³⁹ These muskets, like others found on the Gold Coast, were undoubtedly matchlocks, since the Abrambu used them against the Fetu in 1660, and it is likely that 'Akany' received a few such weapons from their Abrambu vassals.⁴⁰

Certainly by the 1650s guns were to be found not only on the coast but also in the forest kingdoms. Early in 1653 some 'Akany', who, apparently, had muskets already, bought a little gunpowder from the Dutch at Elmina in preparation for a war against the Fante, and about the same time 'Akany' merchants from the coastal towns of Anomabu, Adia, and Kormantine went to Etsi to obtain men, and gunpowder and musketballs for their muskets.⁴¹ The majority of these munitions of war probably came from English traders, who, in 1657, were reported to have sold substantial quantities of muskets and gunpowder on the Gold Coast,

³³ OWIC 11. Reyndrich Caarlof, Fiscael, tot XIX, Casteel del Mina, 26 [Oct.?] 1647; 'Journaal gehouden by my Louys Dammert . . .', op. cit. entry for 12 Oct. 1652.

³⁴ *Vijf Dagregisters* . . . op. cit. 275.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.* 226.

³⁶ 'Journaal gehouden by my Louys Dammaert . . .', op. cit., entry for 9. Feb. 1654; Dapper, op. cit. 302; Dr S. van Brakel, 'Eene Memorie over den Handel der WIC omstreeks 1670', *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historische Genootschap*, Vijf en Dertigste Deel (Amsterdam, 1914), 95.

³⁷ *Vijf Dagregisters* . . . op. cit. 68 and note 6, 93, 260. Daaku writes that 'until some later period in the 17th century, people from the states of Assin, Denkyira, Adanse and even Inta (Ashanti), . . . all came under the term Akani.' K. Y. Daaku, 'Pre-Ashanti states', *GNQ*, no. 9 (1966), 11.

³⁸ *Vijf Dagregisters* . . . op. cit. 264.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 224, 261, 264. Dapper, op. cit. 289, says that the 'Akany, used shields, lances and swords in war.

⁴⁰ W. J. Müller, *Die Africanische auf der Guineisch Gold-Cust gelegene Landschafft Fetu* (Graz, Austria, 1968), 60. The Abrambu paid an annual tribute to 'Akany'. *Vijf Dagregisters* . . . op. cit. 264.

⁴¹ 'Journaal gehouden by my Louys Dammaert . . .', op. cit., entries for 20 and 21 Apr. 1653.

but among the Dutch, on the other hand, the selling of guns, gunpowder, musketballs and the like to local merchants was the exception, while their free distribution among allies in time of need remained the rule.⁴²

The 1660s mark the beginning of the period when a shipment of guns intended for sale on the Gold Coast could be numbered in hundreds instead of in tens as was the case in earlier decades, and hence firearms became available on a larger scale to those who could afford to buy them. The Dutch began to sell arms again. An invoice of June 1660 at the Dutch Fort Crèvecoeur (Accra) included 100 muskets in the list of merchandise, and in 1663 a Dutch ship bound for the Gold Coast (and Gabon) had a cargo containing carbines (3–3¼ ft. long), *roers* (4–4¼ ft. long), pistols and gunpowder.⁴³ The 1661–1663 invoices of the Royal African Company show that 4,038 firearms were carried on approximately thirty ships to the West African coast.⁴⁴ Most of these arms were probably destined for the Gold Coast, since much of the Company's trade was transacted there.

The 1664–5 Anglo-Dutch war on the Gold Coast stimulated the firearms trade and served to spread guns among a larger proportion of the coastal and inland populations. De Ruyter, commander of the Dutch naval fleet sent to the Guinea Coast to seize English forts, refers on one occasion to the 400–500 local people armed with 'good muskets' and defending the English fort at Takoradi, and at the English trading establishment at Kormantine he saw '1,000 Negroes with muskets' who defended the fort.⁴⁵ Valkenburg, the Director-General, sent de Ruyter 1000 Elminas 'armed with muskets and assagais'.⁴⁶

The accounts of Villault de Bellefond and Müller show that in the 1660s, though many soldiers still carried spears of different kinds, swords, axes, shields, and bows and arrows, firearms were used regularly in local warfare; indeed Müller remarked that the Fetu considered the musket as the best and most useful of their weapons.⁴⁷ The steady growth of the

⁴² 'Journaal gehouden by my Louys Dammaert . . .' op. cit., entry for 2 Jan. 1654; 'Rapport van den Generael Valckenburg gedaan in Sept. 1659', Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkekunde Bibliotheek, Leiden; Bijlage VIII 'Vertoog of Deductie . . .' in de Jonge, op. cit. 57. There is no evidence that the Swedes sold guns on the Gold Coast in the 1650s. See V. Granlund, *En Svensk Koloni i Afrika eller Svenska Afrikanska Kompaniets Historia* (Stockholm, 1879), 128, and N. de Roever, 'Twee Concurrenten van de Eerste West-Indische Compagnie' *Ou d-Holland—Zevende Jaargang* (Amsterdam, 1889). Director-General Valkenburg refers to private Dutch traders on the Gold Coast, but he does not state whether or not they sold firearms. See 'Rapport van Generael Valckenburg . . .' op. cit.

⁴³ NBKG 81. 'Dach Register', entry for 6 June 1660; NBKG 228. 'Cargasoen na de Kust van Guinea', 9 Mar. 1663.

⁴⁴ See entries in T 70/309, *passim*, and T. 70/1221, *passim*. Also T 70/909, 'Invoice of goods laden on board the Marmaduke (1662)'. The invoices also show that not all ships carried firearms at this time.

⁴⁵ *De Reis van Michiel Adriaanszoon de Ruyter in 1664–1665*. Uitgegeven door P. Verhoogen en L. Koelmans ('S-Gravenhage, 1961), 83, 245.

⁴⁶ 'Inleiding' in *ibid.* 80.

⁴⁷ Villault de Bellefond, *A Relation of the Coasts of Africk called Guinea* (London, 1670), 254; Müller, op. cit. 126–7, also pp. 134–5.

firearms trade gradually rendered other weapons obsolete.⁴⁸ In November 1673 a single RAC ship bound for Cape Coast Castle carried a total of 1,350 muskets, 200 carbines and 150 barrels of gunpowder, and in the following year two ships sailing to the Guinea coast carried 1,000 muskets, though no gunpowder.⁴⁹ In January 1680 Cape Coast Castle warehouse had on hand 1,807 muskets and 38 carbines, but in November 1686 there were 1,397 firelock (snaphaunce) muskets and 4,107 matchlock muskets in the warehouse.⁵⁰

By this time inland merchants from various forest states were obtaining regular supplies of muskets and gunpowder. In 1678 'Akany' traders visited Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle in order to buy gunpowder, and in 1680 an 'Akany' captain and his people were given thirty muskets by the English.⁵¹ According to Valkenburg, 'Akany' traders visited the inland auriferous regions of 'Enetry, Eqving, Ellen, Afonba, Aboinoy, Ahomie, Peschei and Ahasra (Dacasser)', and Müller stated that merchandise from the coast was taken inland to 'Assingrud' (Assin), 'Alance' (Adanse) and 'Accabel' (Kaase).⁵² Thus, small quantities of firearms in the form of matchlock or firelock muskets were probably reaching these inland districts, and others such as Twifo, Wassa and Akyem, in the 1670s, 1680s and 1690s, although the usual weapons of the 'Akany' and other inland peoples remained javelins, bows and arrows, bucklers and swords, while those of Aowin were mainly poisoned arrows.⁵³

The traffic in firearms developed more slowly in the Ardra (Allada) Kingdom, which until the 1680s dominated the Slave Coast from Popo to Offra. Neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch seem to have sold or presented firearms to the Ardra rulers and officials during the first half of the seventeenth century.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Cf. Müller, op. cit. 127; W. Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London, 1705), 186; Otto Friedrich von der Gröben, *Guineische Reisebeschreibung* (Munich, 1694), 60, 61; J. Rask, *En Kort og Sandferdig Reisebeskrivelse til og fra Guinea* (Trondhjem, 1754), 249–50 and K. Larsen, *De Danske i Guinea* (København, 1918), 19.

⁴⁹ T 70/910. 'Invoice of goods laden on board the Wm. Henery', London, 15 Nov. 1673; 'Invoice of goods . . .', London, Dec. 1674.

⁵⁰ T 70/20. 'Inventory of goods remaining in the warehouse in Cape Coast Castle in Guinny belonging to the RAC of England taken the 12th day of January 1680'; T 70/1229. 'Muskets' in 'Warehouse Book Kept at Cape Coast Castle from Feb. the 1st 1685 to Oct. 1689'.

⁵¹ T 70/20. N. Bradley, M. Hollis, A. Harbin, Cape Coast Castle, 28 Dec. 1678; K. Y. Daaku, 'Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast: 1640–1720' Ph.D. Thesis (Univ. of London, 1964), 149.

⁵² 'Extracten uit Missiven aan de Kamer Amsterdam der OWIC van de Generaal Valkenburgh uit del Mina.' Letter of 10 June 1658. (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkekunde Bibliotheek, Leiden); Müller, op. cit., pp. 271, 273; Daaku (1966), op. cit. 11, 12. The identification of Valkenburg's place-names is uncertain. Cf. also de Bellefond, op. cit. 278, 279, 281.

⁵³ Barbot, op. cit. 189, 209, 211. Elsewhere, 186, he says that the Akwamu and Akyem bought firelocks and gunpowder from the Europeans. On Aowin see Bosman, op. cit. 79, 186. For traditions on firearms in the pre-Asante states see R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (Oxford, 1929), 148, 219, and K. A. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), 92.

⁵⁴ Cf. de Marees, op. cit., 230–1; Ruiters, op. cit. 76; *Vijf Dagregisters . . . passim*.

A list of goods considered suitable for the Ardra trade in 1659 and 1660 included iron bars, textiles, beads, cowry shells and the like, but not firearms nor gunpowder; similarly, Dutch invoices of 1670, 1675 and 1678 also exclude these items.⁵⁵ The trading accounts of the RAC give the impression that as late as 1680 firearms were not sold in the Ardra Kingdom. In 1678 and 1680 the factors at the Ardra port of Offra did not include guns in the list of goods most in demand, nor were they mentioned in the inventory of the factory warehouse.⁵⁶ However, it appears to have been customary to give the Ardra ruler firearms as presents. Dapper states that on the completion of trade at Ardra, European merchants gave the king 'two muskets and 25 pounds of powder', and factor Mildmay at Offra suggested to his superiors that the Ardra sovereign be given 'a case of pistolls with houlsters' and 'two iron blunderbusses'.⁵⁷

In his description of Ardra, d'Elbée refers to guns in that kingdom, which may have been sold there by interlopers, since neither English nor Dutch traders seem to have traded in these weapons. D'Elbée, who visited Ardra in 1669 and 1670, noted that guns were among the goods deemed proper for the Ardra trade. He relates further that he was met at the seaside by 'a company of 100 musketeers whose pieces (were) in good order', and at another time saw '100 troopers, who were armed with blunderbusses and sabres'.⁵⁸ The musketeers and blunderbussmen were probably armed retainers or royal guards attached to the king's court, for d'Elbée remarked that the regular troops of the Ardra army lacked firearms.⁵⁹ This implies that the traffic in guns at this time was not important, and no doubt by contemporary Gold Coast standards it was very small indeed.

The firearms trade to Ardra expanded in the 1680s, but it did not attain the volume already achieved on the Gold Coast. In January 1681, matchlock muskets and gunpowder were among the trade goods most in demand at Ardra, and in June of that year 'bright muskets' (i.e. muskets with polished barrels) were regarded as "goods proper" for every ship *en route* to Ardra.⁶⁰ The demand for firearms, however, was inconstant. Two ships sailing to Ardra in July and August, 1682 carried neither muskets nor gunpowder in their cargoes, but in November one Ardra-bound ship included in its stock 150 bright muskets, 20 carbines and 10

⁵⁵ N.A. 3589 fol. 363, 15 Sept. 1671; Dr S. van Brakel, 'Bescheiden over den Slavehandel der WIC', *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek*. Vierde Deel ('S-Gravenhage, 1918), 77-81. Also Dapper, op. cit. 305-6.

⁵⁶ T 70/20. '[Invoice of] goods most in demand at ye Royall Comps' Factory at Ophra in Ardra', T. Clark and H. Elliott, 17 Sept. 1678; from J. Mildmay, Ophra in Ardra, 13 Oct. 1680.

⁵⁷ Dapper, op. cit. 306; T 70/20. From J. Mildmay, Ophra in Ardra, 13 Oct. 1680.

⁵⁸ 'A Voyage to Ardrah and Travels to the Capital Assem in 1669 and 1670. By the Sieur d'Elbée sent by the French West India Company' in Astley, op. cit. III, 67, 70, 73.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 66, 70, 71.

⁶⁰ T 70/20. 'Invoice of goods most in demand at Ardra factory this present January 15 1681' and H. Greenhill, W. Stapleton, H. Spurway, J. Nightingale, Cape Coast Castle, 10 June 1681.

musketoons.⁶¹ The muskets sent to Ardra at this time were matchlocks, for one invoice included '20 matchees' which were to be sent to that kingdom.⁶²

Dahomey traditions indicate that firearms had reached the Abomey plateau by 1680. The Dahomey king, Wegbaja (d. 1680?), passed a law prohibiting the sale of guns and powder, which suggests that muskets, matchlocks according to tradition, were not sold to other inland peoples by Dahomey traders.⁶³ With the growth of the Ardra-Whydah slave trade after 1690, firearms appeared in much greater numbers. The Whydah kingdom, for example, imported more than 1,000 firearms a year, and as Whydah traders travelled considerable distances inland, it may be assumed that they carried guns as part of their merchandise. Firearms in modest numbers, may, therefore, have been taken not only to Dahomey, but also to Yoruba and other neighbouring states.⁶⁴

There was an almost insatiable market for firearms on the Gold and Slave Coasts in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The Dutch factor Bosman, writing at the turn of the eighteenth century, explains why European merchants were obliged to satisfy this demand for guns and other munitions of war:

Perhaps you wonder how the Negroes come to be furnished with fire-arms, but you will have no reason when you know we sell them incredible quantities, thereby obliging them with a knife to cut our own throats. But we are forced to it; for it we would not, they might be sufficiently stored with that commodity by the English, Danes, and Brandenburgers; and could we all agree together not to sell them any, the English and Zeeland interlopers would abundantly furnish them. And since that gunpowder for some time hath been the chief vendible merchandise [on the Gold Coast], we should have found but an insufficient trade without our share in it.⁶⁵

Some idea of the scale of English participation in this trade can be gleaned from the records of the Royal African Company. Between 1673

⁶¹ T 70/911. 'Invoice of goods laden on board the 'Bohemiah' bound for Ardra for the purchasing of 330 Negroes', London, 19 July 1682; 'Invoice of goods laden on board the Alexander bound for Ardra to purchase 360 Negroes', London, 26 Aug. 1682; 'Invoice of goods laden on board the 'Merchants Bonaventer' bound for Ardra', London, 21 Nov. 1682.

⁶² T 70/1223, 'Pro 490 slaves to be purchased by Capt. P. Weybourn & Comp. at Ardra . . .', (London), 22 Mar. 1687.

⁶³ A. Le Herissé, *L'Ancien Royaume du Dahomey* (Paris, 1911), 60-1; M. J. and F. S. Herskovits, *Dahomean Narrative* (Northwestern Univ. Press, 1958), 362.

⁶⁴ On Ardra-Whydah firearms trade see T 70/919 *passim*, T 70/920 *passim*, and T 70/922 *passim*. Dutch and French gun imports would raise the number of firearms imported into Whydah to well over 2,000 *per annum*. On Whydah merchants see Barbot, *op. cit.* 327 and E. Tylleman, *En liden Enfoldig Beretning om Det Landskab Guinea op dets Beskæfenhed langs ved Sø-kanten* (Kjøbenhavn, 1697), 130. An early eighteenth-century reference states that 'Whydah cloths [are] made at Lucamee where no white men ever were'. T 70/7. Baldwin, Mabyn and Barlow, Whydah, 9 Aug. 1723. 'Lucamee' may in fact be the same as Oyo.

⁶⁵ Bosman, *op. cit.* 184. Cf. Ratelband (1947), *op. cit.* 264. The firearms trade, like the trade in other commodities, was very lucrative. Brandenburg merchants made a profit of 130-158 per cent on carbines and muskets; other goods: 160 per cent on iron bars, 223 per cent on cloth, 550 per cent on glass-beads and 191 per cent on spirits. R. Schück, *Brandenburg-Preussens Kolonial-Politik* (Leipzig, 1889), 331. In 1787 the

and 1704, this company shipped nearly 66,000 firearms and over 9,000 barrels of gunpowder to the West African Coast, and from 1701 to 1704 a total of 32,954 small arms were sent.⁶⁶ The precise proportion consigned to the Gold and Slave Coasts is not certain, but in view of the large and lucrative trade in gold, slaves, and ivory, it would seem that well over half of the arms shipments would have gone to these places, the remainder being sent to Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast and Angola.

The Dutch were probably the leading exporters of firearms to the Guinea Coast.⁶⁷ In December 1687 there were 8,717 'snaphanen' (snap-haunce muskets) at the Dutch establishments on the Gold Coast, and the Director-General at Elmina requested another 3,000 long 'snaphanen' and 3,000 (matchlock?) muskets from Amsterdam.⁶⁸ Three years later the Dutch establishments required 4,000 guns and 100,000 pounds of gunpowder, and in 1700 6,000 carbines and 2,000 fine long 'snaphanen' were requested for the Gold Coast.⁶⁹ In July 1704 the WIC had on hand at its Gold and Slave Coast posts a total of 7,741 guns.⁷⁰ At the Dutch lodge of Beraku, on the Gold Coast, 2,430 lb. of gunpowder, 16 short 'roers' (flintlocks), 166 long carbines and 220 fine short carbines were sold in the course of two months.⁷¹

Brandenburg and Danish firearms shipments were considerably smaller. In the later seventeenth century only two or three Danish ships a year visited the Gold Coast.⁷² In 1674 the Danish ship *Charlotta Amalia*

prime cost of 200 flintlock muskets was £130, the Committee of Merchants Trading to Africa paid £200 for them, and they were sold on the Guinea Coast for £300. It may be noted that mortars, hand grenades and the like were not sold to local merchants. Occasionally cannon were sold or presented as gifts. See Bosman, op. cit. 187 and *Voyage du Chevalier des Marchais en Guinée, Isles Voisines et à Cayenne, fait en 1725, 1726 and 1727*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1730), II, 47. Mr N. *Voyages au Côtes de Guinée et en Amerique* (Amsterdam, 1719), 45 note.

⁶⁶ K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London, 1957), 177, 356.

⁶⁷ The Dutch sent firearms not only to West Africa but to England, Denmark and various other European states, as well as to North Africa and Asia. A. J. Alm, 'Handels-gevär', *Livruskammeren*, Journal of the Royal Armoury Stockholm, v, 1-2 (Stockholm, 1949-51), 74; T. Lenk, *Flintlåset* (Stockholm, 1939), 26-9; Davies op. cit. 173; H. L. Blackmore, *British Military Firearms 1650-1850* (London, 1961), 37, 38-9; Th. Møller, *Gamle Danske Militær Våben* (Copenhagen, 1963), 11; Cipolla, op. cit. 48-51. Cf. also Tylleman, op. cit. 150 and Barbot, op. cit. 273.

⁶⁸ WIC 54. De Vergaderinge der thiener aan den Directeur-Generaal N. Sweerts op El Mina, Amsterdam, 9 Oct. 1688.

⁶⁹ WIC 124. 'Extract uyt het Register der resolutien gehouden by den Heer Dir. Gen. en Raden over de Noort en Zuyt Cust van Africa ter s'gaderinge jnt Castell St. George del Mina' 9 Jan. 1690; WIC 97. 'Formulier en Petie van Koopmansz welke tot voort zetting van de Handel op de Gout Custe van Guinea dienstig. . . ' Casteel St. George d'Elmina, 15 Apr. 1700.

⁷⁰ WIC 98. 'Generall Restant der Koopmansz dewelke moet en komente resteeren op de Kuste van Guinea op alle Comps fort en Logien en Scheepen dezen ultmo July 1704.'

⁷¹ WIC 98. 'Extract der Coopmansz de welke door ordre van den Dir. Gen. W. de la Palma zyn vernegotieert in de maanden Juny & July 1704 in de logie tot Bercoe in Guinea.' Barbot, op. cit. 273, stated that the French sold more muskets than the English and Dutch.

⁷² W. Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies under Company Rule* (New York, 1917), 151-2. Brandenburg trade seems to have been equally small.

carried 200 matchlock muskets, nearly 200 'snaphaner', and 72 barrels of gunpowder.⁷³ This arms shipment was characteristic of other Danish cargoes until the 1690s. A Brandenburg ship sold at Cape Apollonia 500 muskets and 400 pounds of gunpowder in 1682; however, a few years later the Dutch seized a Brandenburg ship anchored off Takoradi which had a freight comprising *inter alia* 1,000 lb. of gunpowder, but only 105 muskets and 97 long 'roers'.⁷⁴

Dutch and English interlopers may have sold a larger number of firearms on the Gold and Slave Coasts than the representatives of the different trading companies.⁷⁵ One interloper's ship, seized by the Dutch in 1725, carried 12,880 lb. of gunpowder, 1,977 flintlock muskets, and one pistol; again, in 1726 the cargo of another captured interloper's ship yielded *inter alia* 55,135 lb. of gunpowder, 2,243 flintlock muskets, and nine pistols.⁷⁶

The demand for guns and other munitions of war fluctuated considerably: 'It may happen when you send a quantity of guns' (wrote Sir Dalby Thomas) 'they may be out of demand, for the trade runs sometimes for two or three months on one sort of goods and then the demand ceases. . .'.⁷⁷ Ships' cargoes reflected this fluctuating demand. Firearms, gunpowder, shot, flintstones, bandoliers and other munitions of war could form from 8 per cent to nearly 30 per cent of a ship's cargo.⁷⁸

From the late seventeenth century to the nineteenth century diverse types of firearms were sold on the Gold and Slave Coasts. Two reports of the Committee of Goods (1682-3) give a list of guns proposed for the West African market:⁷⁹

⁷³ G. Nørregard, 'Varer til Guinea' Handels- og Søfarts Museet på Kronborg. (Årbog, 1951), 61.

⁷⁴ Von Gröben, op. cit. 61; VVWIS 1166. 'Copia van de Reeckeninge van Kosten, schaden, ende Interessen mitsgaders reparatie voor het geweld geleden by de Churfurstelycke Brand. Afri. Comp. door die van de N.W.I.C. ende hare Gouverneur Generael Sweerts, op 't fort del Mina.'

⁷⁵ Cf. T 70/10. From Agent N. Bradley, Cabo Corso Castle 29 May 1679; T 70/11. From H. Nurse & S. Humfryes, Cabo Corso Castle, Oct. 1685; T 70/6. From J. Phipps, Cape Coast Castle, 30 April 1716; Bosman, op. cit., 5-6; Rask, op. cit. 78-9; 'Relation du Voyage de Guynée fait en 1698 par Chevalier Damon' in P. Roussier, *L'Établissement D'Issiny* (Paris, 1935), 78.

⁷⁶ VVWIS 929. 'In den Jare 1725 ter Kust van Guinea veroverd der Enterloper de Witte Moor met de onder-genoemde Goederen geconfisqueert' and 'In den Jare 1726 ter Kust van Guinea veroverd der Enterloper der 3 Marries en met de zelve de onder-genoemde Koopmanschappen geconfisqueert'. See also the entries for Feb. and Aug. 1728.

⁷⁷ T 70/5. Sir Dalby Thomas, Cape Coast Castle, 30 Sept. 1708.

⁷⁸ See notes 83 and 85 below where references to invoices are given; also J. Hudig Dzn, *De Scheepvaart op West-Afrika en West-Indië in de Actiende eeuw* (Amsterdam [1927]), 16. For the period 1846-69 Szoon estimated that firearms and munitions constituted 9 per cent of the total Dutch trade to the Gold Coast. H. M. Szoon, *De Afstand der Kust van Guinea aan England* (Rotterdam, 1871), 4.

⁷⁹ T 70/125. 'At Committee of Goods . . . ' 20 Feb. 1682; T 70/126. 'At Committee of Goods . . . ' 27 Mar. 1683. For descriptions of these arms and locks see Alm, op. cit. 97, Blackmore, op. cit. 20, 21, 26, 29-30, 32, 36, 49 and W. Y. Carmen, *A History of firearms* (London, 1955).

- (1) Firelock musket, black (tarred) barrel, black stock and English lock at 12s. 8d.
- (2) Birding gun (also called fowling piece), 4½ ft. long, walnut stock and French lock at 20s. 8d.
- (3) Blunderbuss, iron barrel, walnut stock and French lock at 20s. 8d.
- (4) Carbine with ribs, 2¼ ft. long, walnut stock and French lock at 15s. 8d.
- (5) Carbine, 2¼ ft. long, half-plated beech stock and English lock at 12s. 8d.
- (6) Musket, bright barrel plated round, walnut stock and match lock at 8s. 8d.
- (7) Muskatoon (a kind of blunderbuss), 2½ ft. long, iron barrel, walnut stock, and French lock at 15s. 6d.
- (8) Firelock musket, black barrel, beech stock and English lock at 10s.

In August 1684, the Committee of Goods ordered Mr Silko to 'make 30 musquetts to ye Dutch pattern', a move undoubtedly prompted by demands at Cape Coast Castle for Dutch snaphaunce muskets rather than English matchlocks, and by the fact that the RAC had 5,000 unsold English guns in its London warehouse.⁸⁰ Dutch muskets were said to have better proof than English muskets, 'which generally have the Tower proof and theirs none at all'.⁸¹

The flintlock replaced the matchlock on the Gold and Slave Coasts in the 1690s.⁸² From about 1690 until the 1730s the principal firearm export to the Gold and Slave Coasts was the 'fuzee' (fusil).⁸³ In seventeenth century Europe this term referred to both snaphaunce and flintlock muskets as well as long carbines; however, on the West African coast it was at one time synonymous with a birding gun (fowling piece), but at other times was a generic designation for a flintlock musket.⁸⁴ 'Fuzee', like other names used to designate firearms sold on the Guinea Coast, was therefore an ambiguous term, but the most common application would appear to have been the flintlock musket.

From c. 1690 until the mid-eighteenth century the following types of firearms were sent to the Gold and Slave Coasts by the RAC:⁸⁵

⁸⁰ T 70/126. 'At Committee of Goods' 20 Aug. 1684; T 70/11. From A. Greenhill, W. Master, T. Adams, Cape Coast Castle, 14 Dec. 1683; From the same 5 Jan. 1684; Davies, op. cit. 173 note 3.

⁸¹ T 70/51. To N. Buckeridge, W. Cooper and T. Brom from W. Hall, Dept. Governor, [et al.], London, 9 June 1698.

⁸² Cf. Tylleman, *ibid.*

⁸³ See e.g. the invoices in T 70/128 *passim*, T 70/129 *passim*, T 70/919 *passim*, T 70/920 *passim*, T 70/921 *passim*, and T 70/922 *passim*.

⁸⁴ Carmen, op. cit. 101; Hayward, op. cit. 1, 134; Blackmore, op. cit. 32, 61; T 70/129, 'Committee of Goods', 6 Feb. 1700; T 70/26, Sir Dalby Thomas [Cape Coast Castle], 31 Aug. 1708. Carmen, *ibid.* states that the snaphaunce is the same as the flintlock 'except for a slight rearrangement of the parts already in use, with the addition of the "frizzen" or battery. It is a point of manufacturing rather than invention.'

⁸⁵ See references in note 83 above and also the invoices in T 70/923 *passim*, T 70/924 *passim*, T 70/925 *passim*, T 70/1231 *passim* and T 70/1466 *passim*. For descriptions of these guns and locks see Alm, op. cit. 87–8, 90, Lenk, op. cit. 27, 28, Blackmore, op. cit. 39, 43. Carmen, op. cit. 102, says that seventeenth century European flintlocks carried 14 lead bullets (balls) to the pound. The prices of the ordinary trade guns varied over the decades. The cheapest was the trading gun at 6s. 6d. (in the 1720s it cost 11s. to 12s. 6d.) while the blunderbuss was the dearest at 26s. 8d.

- (1) Birding gun (also called fowling piece)—4 or 4½ ft. long, walnut stock, large bore, doglock.
- (2) Fuzee—4 or 4½ ft. long, iron or brass mounting (furniture), square or round barrel, plain, painted or spotted stocks, round lock, high East India bore. Late seventeenth and early eighteenth century fuzees carried balls of 10 and 14 to the pound, but later models carried 27 to the pound.
- (3) Blunderbuss—brass mounting.
- (4) Musketoons—iron or brass mounting, carried eight balls to the pound.
- (5) Carbine—2½ ft. barrel, doglock.
- (6) Buccaneer—beech or walnut stock, hollowed or not hollowed in the butt, square, dog or ketchlock, square or round barrel, carried 16 balls to the pound.
- (7) French and Dutch Buccaneers.
- (8) French and Dutch muskets.
- (9) Horse pistols.
- (10) Various types of 'fine guns'—double-barrelled gun with finely gilt barrels; double-barrelled gun 'to turn around'; fuzee, gilted, inlaid with silver, engraved, with or without bayonet in the butt; buccaneer, finely gilt and engraved. The prices of these guns ranged from 15s. to nearly £7 each. There is a reference to an engraved gun priced at £12.
- (11) Trading gun—round or square barrel, round or flat lock, hollowed or not hollowed in the butt.

During the same period Dutch firearms were equally variegated:⁸⁶

- (1) Snaphaunce or flintlock, of which there were several types: state, ship and English, long or short (barrels ranged from four to five feet in length), fine (i.e. gilded) or ordinary, iron or copper (brass) mounting, single- and double-barrelled, with and without bayonet.
- (2) Carbine—this firearm also appeared in different styles: long and short (the barrel was generally four feet long), ordinary and fine, iron and copper (brass) mountings; carried 16 balls to a pound.
- (3) Pistol—iron or brass mountings, single- or double-barrelled.
- (4) Buccaneer.
- (5) Blunderbuss.
- (6) Elephant shooters ('schieters').

The latter gun may have been the firearm referred to by Mr Johnson of Cape Coast Castle, who 'recommended the Dutch guns as proper to kill elephants . . .'⁸⁷

Danish firearms, most of which came from Holland, included 'Fuzees' (*Fusiler*), carbines, musketoons, and cheap pistols.⁸⁸ Nørregård states that

⁸⁶ WIC 484 *passim*; WIC 485 *passim*; WIC 97, 'Formulier en Petitie van Koopmansz welke tot voort zetting van de Handel op de Gout Custe van Guinea . . .' Casteel St. Geo d'Elmina, 15 Apr. 1700; WIC 1024, 'Reek. der Handelde als Resterende Coopmanschappen en de welke door andre van de Bewint hebbers der Geoctroyeerde WIC . . .' 13 Oct. 1691, and 'Generaale Reekening alsmede bewys der resterende Coopmanschappen . . . zedert ulto Oct. 1690 tot den laasten Nov. 1691 ten comptoire van Offra Ardra . . .'; A. Wisse, *De Commercie-Compagnie te Middelburg ban haar Oprichting tot het Jaar 1754* (Utrecht, 1933), 56, 57–8.

⁸⁷ T 70/6. Mr Johnson to Capt. R. Wheeler of ye Experiment, Cape Coast Castle, 5 Apr. 1718.

⁸⁸ Tylleman, *ibid.*

gilded and damascened muskets ('fine guns') were first exported by the Danes between 1687 and 1705.⁸⁹ These guns were intended only for wealthy merchants, important officials, and rulers of the Gold and Slave Coast states. Sir Dalby Thomas wrote:

Fuzees not exceeding 3 ft. 8 in. long in the barrel, well-gilded or silvered and as showish as they can be with good locks and some may be finer than others to give the greater and lesser men, aggate flints may be more acceptable than the common flints . . .⁹⁰

Carbines or fuzees 'four fingers shorter than the usual size' were preferred by the inland people, while the coastal people had a preference for the common or ordinary fuzees.⁹¹ The latter was more common in the Whydah Kingdom than in Ardra, where, Marchais wrote, their muskets 'are shorter than ours; they are correctly speaking, musketoons of large calibre which carry eight balls to the lb.'⁹² Dutch guns were highly esteemed. Sir Dalby Thomas wrote that the Dutch had a 'pretty gun curiously finished which they sell five and six for a bendy [c. £8] and the black cabboceers are great admirers of them for their own particular use'.⁹³ Muskets with bayonets enjoyed a brief popularity, but although they were offered six for a *benda* to traders and were sent as presents to the rulers of Asante, Akwamu and other states, there was never a large and continuous demand for them.⁹⁴

After 1750 the Danish musket (Dane gun or long Dane) became the principal firearm export to West Africa, and it remained the most popular of all guns until the nineteenth century. The Danish factor Rømer stated that the Danish flintlock, which was '1½ hands longer' than the English flintlock, sold better than the latter; consequently the English (and later the French) copied the Danish musket, and sent several thousand to their trading establishments on the Guinea coast.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Nørregård, op. cit. 61–2 and note 5.

⁹⁰ T 70/26. Sir Dalby Thomas [Cape Coast Castle], 31 Aug. 1708.

⁹¹ T 70/22. 'Remarks' by Sir Dalby Thomas in 'Warehouse Keepers Acco. for the month of May, Cape Coast Castle, 1707'; 'Remarks on the Scheme of Trade' in 'Cape Coast Castle Warehouse Keeper Accot. for the month of Feb. 1708', Wm. Hicks.

⁹² Marchais, op. cit. II, 243, 278.

⁹³ T 70/22. 'An Account of goods disposed of for Gold, Elephant Teeth, Slaves, etc. with the months charge at Cape Coast Castle and out factories for the month of Sept. 1709.'

⁹⁴ T 70/22. Sir Dalby Thomas, Cape Coast Castle, 12 Sept. 1709. Muskets with bayonets were never extensively used by soldiers of the Gold and Slave Coast states. The Dahomey king Ghezo seems to have thought highly of flintlock muskets with bayonets. FO 84/886. 'Facts relating to my second visit to Abomey' (L. Fraser, H.M. Vice Consul for the Kingdom of Dahomey), entry for 16 Aug. 1851.

⁹⁵ L. F. Rømer, *Tilforladelig Efterretning om Kysten Guinea* (Kjøbenhavn, 1760), 213–14. Rømer states that the Danish musket came originally from Zelle (Celle) in Hanover. In the 1780s the Danes obtained their firearms for the Gold and Slave Coast trade at Suhl, but in the early nineteenth century these weapons came from near Hamburg. 'Fractura over et Skibs Kargo of 130 Kommerz Laester for Missionen i Guinea', *Archiv for Statistik, Politik og Huusholdnings Videnskaber*. Udgivet af Prof. F. Thaarup. Tredie Bind (Kjøbenhavn, 1797–8), 251; H. C. Monrad, *Bidrag till en Skildring af Guinea-Kysten og dens Indbyggere, og til en Beskrivelse over de Danske Colonier paa denne Kyst* (Kjøbenhavn, 1822), 284–5.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa sent the following firearms to West Africa:⁹⁶

- (1) Danish musket—iron or brass mounting, walnut stock with bump-heel plates, fence-panned or bridle lock, tips to the rammers, brass nose-bands.
- (2) Birding gun (which was almost as popular as the Dane gun)—with or without brass lock and plates, walnut stock, carved or plain, with tips.
- (3) Blunderbuss—brass mounted, walnut stock, with or without swivels, single or double bridle lock, with or without spring bayonet.
- (4) Fuzee—brass mounted with tail pipes, walnut stock with bump-heel plates, bridle or fence-panned lock, carved barrel.
- (5) Musket—hardened and polished fence-panned lock, walnut stock, full-bored London proved barrel, steelmounted tips to the rammers and hollowed up the sharps.
- (6) Tower carbine with iron mounting.
- (7) Dutch musket with or without brasswork on barrel.
- (8) French musket.
- (9) French prize gun.
- (10) Pistols.

At the Dutch establishments on the Gold Coast, Danish, Dutch, Soldier, American, and short English muskets were imported.⁹⁷

There was little if any change in the types of firearms sent to the Gold and Slave Coasts in the first half of the nineteenth century. They included Buccaneer guns, Tower proof or short muskets, carbines, Dane guns or long muskets, soldiers' muskets, French muskets, birding guns, elephant guns, and 'improved dragoon horse pistols'.⁹⁸ The volume of the fire-arms trade at this time was indeed tremendous. It was estimated that in 1829 Britain exported 52,540 guns and pistols and nearly two million lbs. of gunpowder to the Gold and Slave Coasts and the Bight of Benin, while in 1840 Cape Coast alone received 2,781 cases of muskets and 21,081 barrels of gunpowder.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ T 70/926 *passim*; T 70/927 *passim*; T 70/928 *passim*; T 70/929 *passim*; T 70/930 *passim*; T 70/974 *passim*.

⁹⁷ VVWIS 408. [Report on the Establishments in Guinea, 1790–2]. From the 1730s to 1754 the 'Commercie-Compagnie' of Middelburg exported annually to West Africa 15,000 guns and 28,100 lbs. of gunpowder. Wisse, *op. cit.* 57–8. Between 1781 and 1789 Danish ships carried to the Gold and Slave Coasts 88,000–92,000 flintlock muskets and 176,000–180,000 lb. of gunpowder. Larsen, *op. cit.* 84, 91.

⁹⁸ P. Labarthe, *Voyage à la Côte de Guinée* (Paris, 1805), 229 note 17, 251 note 26, 270 note 35; J. Adams, *Remarks on the Country extending from Cape Palmas to the River Congo* (London, 1823), 236, 238, 241, 261; E. Bouët-Willaumez, *Commerce et Traite des Noirs* (Paris, 1848), 117; *De Kust van Guinea* (Rotterdam, 1850), 38, 43; R. Schnapper, *La Politique et le Commerce Français dans le Golfe de Guinée de 1838 à 1871* (Mouton & Co., 1961), p. 116 and note 6; Landolphe quoted in H. Ling Roth, *Great Benin* (London, 1968 reissue), 137. See also NBKG 769, 'Vergadering van den Raad van Koophandel ter Kust van Guinea', 18 May 1833.

⁹⁹ R. Montgomery Martin, *History of the British Colonies*, 5 vols (London, 1835), iv, 609; H. Swanzy, 'A Trading Family in the 19th century Gold Coast', *Transactions of the Historical Society of the Gold Coast and Togo*, 11 (1956), 96.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, firearms spread deeper into the lands behind the coast. This gradual dispersion of guns coincided with the rise and consolidation of expansionist states like Akwamu, Denkyira, Asante and Dahomey, whose military prowess was based on the firearm.¹⁰⁰ By the mid-eighteenth century Asante and Dahomey dominated the Gold and Slave Coasts, politically and militarily. A Dutch report of 1742 refers to an Asante military unit of 5,000 musketeers in Akwamu territory east of the Volta, and another of 1837 states that the Asante king had ordered 1,000 muskets from the Dutch.¹⁰¹ During the period 1870–2, 18,139 muskets and 29,062 kegs of gunpowder were imported into Asante from the coast.¹⁰² Referring to the firearms of Dahomey, Ghezo, the ruler of that state, remarked in 1850, that this last war had cost him 4,000 muskets; '4,000 more were to be sent to the Agonee people; and 4,000 were ready for the newly raised soldiers for the next war', and in 1854 he requested 1,000 blunderbusses with flintlocks and brass mountings from the English.¹⁰³

The bulk of the firearms taken into Asante and Dahomey was not carried further afield, because both states imposed restrictions on the distribution of guns in the lands to their north.¹⁰⁴ However, by the 1780s, Dagomba, a northern Asante dependency, had a small body of musketeers, and in the mid-nineteenth century Barth refers to a town two days east of Yendi, the Dagomba capital, where all of the inhabitants had guns.¹⁰⁵ Yet in the late nineteenth century the Bassari and other eastern neighbours of Dagomba possessed few muskets, depending mainly on poisoned spears and arrows.¹⁰⁶ Further east, the German traveller Count Zech did not see a single firearm in Semere or in Logba country, but at the market centre of Djougou, northwest of Abomey, he observed that a quarter of the inhabitants had muskets.¹⁰⁷

The Dahomey kings sent small numbers of firearms to Bariba (Borgu) as gifts for the rulers of that kingdom, a practice that was in existence in the early nineteenth century and may in fact date back to the mid-eighteenth

¹⁰⁰ Archers continued to play an important role in the Akwamu army in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. See Bosman, *op. cit.* 186. As late as 1807 bowmen were still found in the ranks of the Asante army. T 70/1586 (2), To the Committee from Torrane, Cape Coast Castle, 20 July 1807. The weaponry of Dahomey soldiers included bows and arrows and clubs as well as guns. See e.g. J. M'Leod, *A Voyage to Africa* (London, 1820), 45.

¹⁰¹ NBKG 293. 'Relaas van een Accrase Commissie door 'd Hr. Hendk. Roems en P. B. Verscheuren', entry for 9 Apr. 1742; AMK 3970. 'Gouvernements-Journaal', entries for 12 and 13 May 1837.

¹⁰² F. E. Forbes, *Dahomey and the Dahomans*, 2 vols. (London, 1851), II, 193; CO 96/30. T. B. Freeman to Lt.-Col. Hill, Cape Coast, 10 Aug. 1854.

¹⁰³ J. Duncan, *Travels in Western Africa in 1845 and 1846*, 2 vols. (London, 1847), II, 11–12, 139–40, 157, 283–4; T. E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (Frank Cass, 1966, 3rd ed.), 335.

¹⁰⁴ P. E. Isert, *Reise nach Guinea* (Kopenhagen, 1788), 35 note 1, 123–4; H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, 5 vols. (London, 1857–8), IV, 556.

¹⁰⁵ H. Klose, *Togo unter Deutsche Flagge* (Berlin, 1899), 451, 486, 532.

¹⁰⁷ R. Cornevin, *Histoire du Dahomey* (Paris, 1962), 235.

century.¹⁰⁸ The sovereigns of Asante also distributed firearms and gunpowder as gifts to rulers of neighbouring states, but they also permitted guns and gunpowder to be sent to Kong and Timbuktu, where they were publicly sold.¹⁰⁹ A late nineteenth century reference states that 'old long Dane guns' were carried into Mossi and other places where cavalry were used. These guns were 'shortened by cutting off a portion of the barrel and stock to adapt them for cavalry use'.¹¹⁰ Firearms, however, remained the exception rather than the rule in the lands north of Asante (Gonja, Dagomba, Mamprussi, etc.), where spears, lances, swords and bows and arrows prevailed as weapons of warfare and hunting¹¹¹.

II. FIREARM TECHNOLOGY

Gold and Slave Coast traders expected the firearms they bought from the Europeans to have certain definite features¹¹²:

- (1) Strong barrels.
- (2) Brass mounting.
- (3) Locks which gave a loud click when cocked.
- (4) Large bores.
- (5) Lightness of weight.

Other firearm specifications were less permanent and varied over the years. Thus polished (bright) barrels and locks were supplanted by muskets with tarred (black) barrels and locks in the early eighteenth century, and painted and spotted stocks alternated with plain stocks in popularity.¹¹³ However, there is no evidence that one type of flintlock mechanism (e.g. the round lock) was preferred to another type (e.g. the flat or dog lock), or that firearms with round barrels were preferred to those with square barrels. The peoples living in the forest states of the Gold Coast preferred, in the early eighteenth century, the carbine to the 'fuzee', but in the nineteenth century they used the Dane gun, while the coastal people, on the other hand, were armed largely with the 'tower gun or

¹⁰⁸ Com. Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa* (London, 1829), 83-4, 93, 123.

¹⁰⁹ I. Wilks, 'Wargee of Astrakhan', *Africa Remembered*, ed. P. Curtin (The Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 184.

¹¹⁰ Major C. Barter, 'Notes on Ashanti', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, xii (1896), 457.

¹¹¹ J. A. de Marée, *Reizen op en Beschrijving van de Goutkust van Guinea*, 2 vols. (In 'S-Gravenhage en te Amsterdam, 1817), II, 267; Monrad, op. cit. 114; Duncan, op. cit. I, 37; J. B. J. van Doren, *Reis naar Nederlands Oost-Indie of Land- en Zeetogten gedurende de twee eerste jaren mijns verblijfs op Java* ('S-Gravenhage, 1851), 152-3; Col. Oliver and Mr Mitchell, *Précis of Information Concerning the Gold Coast Colony* (London, 1887), 39.

¹¹² T 70/22 *passim*; Barbot, op. cit. 274; Römer, op. cit. 213-14; Labarthe, op. cit. 261 note 30; Adams, op. cit. 261; S. Berbain, *Le Comptoir Français de Juda (Quidah) au XIII^e Siècle* (Paris, 1942), 79. See also Alm, op. cit. 81-2.

¹¹³ Cf. T 70/22 *passim*.

fusil' (short musket).¹¹⁴ The Dane gun probably superseded the carbine as a favourite weapon among the inland peoples in the second half of the eighteenth century. East of the Volta, tastes in firearms differed. From the late seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century, the blunderbuss and, its variant, the musketoon, were almost as popular in the Ardra, Whydah and Dahomey kingdoms as the 'fuzee' and the Dane gun.¹¹⁵

The firearms destined for the Guinea Coast varied in quality, although it was an accepted practice to send large numbers of defective guns to West Africa.¹¹⁶ In the 1660s Müller noted that old and new muskets were sold on the Gold Coast.¹¹⁷ Cape Coast Castle warehouse had on hand, in 1679, a total of 929 old and damaged muskets, 68 old musket barrels and 38 old carbines.¹¹⁸ When such arms were not marketable they were sent to London, where they were cleaned, repaired, and made saleable at a lower price; this practice was also observed by the Dutch, who forwarded their damaged firearms to Holland.¹¹⁹

Not all faulty firearms, however, were repaired and made usable. Sir Dalby Thomas wrote that several muskets sold by the English had burst, like Dutch guns, and some were said to have 'broke' when local traders tested them at Cape Coast Castle. These, Dalby concluded, were 'second-hand guns vamped up'.¹²⁰ In 1719 it was said that out of a shipment of firearms received at Cape Coast Castle, hardly four muskets out of every fifty were serviceable.¹²¹ The Danish governor, Schielderup, complained to his superiors in Copenhagen in 1736 about the carbines which had burst on firing after being given to the Danish allies at Osu; yet there was no change in official policy, for in 1744 the Danes sold Akwamu traders 768 old flintlocks, and in 1772 1,200 of the flintlock muskets at Christiansborg were in such bad condition that the local merchants refused to buy them.¹²² On the Slave Coast there was no difference. Messengers from the King of Dahomey, for example, complained to the English at

¹¹⁴ F. Swanzy, 'Narrative of the Expedition to Apollonia, from Cape Coast Castle, in 1848', *Colburns United Service Magazine and Naval and Military Journal*, Part II (London, 1850), 60-1. See p. 199 above.

¹¹⁵ D'Elbée, op. cit. 70; Marchais, op. cit. II, 278; [Pruneau de Pommegorge] *Description de la Nigritie* (Amsterdam, 1789), 181; Labarthe, op. cit. 149; A. L. D'Albéca, *La France au Dahomey* (Paris, 1895), 217, 218.

¹¹⁶ Mr N., op. cit. 43; Marchais, op. cit. II, 242, described this practice as 'prudent'.

¹¹⁷ Müller, op. cit. 127.

¹¹⁸ T 70/20. 'Goods remaining in Cape Coast Castle... belonging to the RAC of England', 12 Aug. 1679.

¹¹⁹ T 70/128. 'Committee of Goods', 18 July 1695; T 70/14, Sir Dalby Thomas, Cape Coast Castle, 16 Nov. 1704; WIC 97. Wilhelm de la Palma [Elmina Castle], 26 June 1707.

¹²⁰ T 70/22. Sir Dalby Thomas, Cape Coast Castle, 28 Apr. 1709.

¹²¹ T 70/22. 'Extracts of Letters from Mess. Phipps [*et al.*] at Cape Coast Castle relating to the Goods Wanting.' Letter of 30 Nov. 1719.

¹²² G. L. Grove, 'Om Søren Schielderup, Guvernør paa Guineakysten', *Personall-historisk Tidsskrift*, Tredie Række, 4. Bind (Kjøbenhavn og Christiania, 1895), 303; Guvernører o.a. betjende i Guinea vedk. 1723-54. Indkommende Forrige opperhoved; Guinea. C. G. Dorph, Christiansborg. 30 Mar. 1744 (Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen); T. Hansen, *Slavernes Skibe* (Haslev, 1968), 97-8.

Fort Williams, Whydah, because several of the guns that had been purchased there had burst when fired.¹²³

Defective firearms could have one or more of the following faults:¹²⁴

- (1) Locks with broken cocks.
- (2) Rusty locks.
- (3) Holes or cracks in the barrels.
- (4) Stocks made of pieces of wood glued together.
- (5) The screws attached to the locks were so small that they fell out of the holes.

Like firearms, gunpowder also varied in kind and in quality. In 1678 powder 'of a midling course' was deemed suitable for the Guinea Coast trade, but in the 1690s and the early eighteenth century powder of the largest grain in 20, 30 and 40 lb. barrels was preferred to fine gunpowder.¹²⁵ During the second half of the eighteenth century, the gunpowder sold on the Gold and Slave Coasts is referred to variously as 'African glazed', 'cannon powder', and powder with large angular grains.¹²⁶ In the mid-nineteenth century, it was observed that in West Africa 'Pulver wurde in der Form von schletem, grobem Kanonenpulver verlangt'.¹²⁷

Danish and Dutch gunpowder was considered superior to English powder, while the latter was said to be better than the French.¹²⁸ In the first half of the nineteenth century, the gunpowder shipped by English traders to West Africa contained 70 per cent saltpetre, but the French gunpowder had only 62 per cent.¹²⁹ However, after 1850 a new French gunpowder was sent to the Guinea Coast, and this contained 77 per cent saltpetre, 13 per cent sulphur, and 10 per cent carbon.¹³⁰ Powder with a low saltpetre content was suitable for the trade muskets sold in West

¹²³ T 70/1158. Williams Fort, Whydah, Daybook, entry for 30 June 1758. For other references to faulty firearms see Alm, op. cit. 75–6; Berbain, op. cit. 85; Schnappers, op. cit. p. 116 and notes 5 and 6, and B. M. D. Smith, 'The Galtons of Birmingham: Quaker Gun Merchants and Bankers, 1702–1831', *Business History*, ix. nos. 1 and 2 (1967), 135 and note 2, 138–9.

¹²⁴ T 70/22 *passim*. Referring to the stocks of firearms, Melvill wrote that a 'glued stock will never do in that hot moist air'. T 70/1694. T. Melvill, [Cape Coast Castle], 17 Mar. 1755. Blunderbusses, musketoons, 'fine guns', pistols, Buccaneer guns and the like appear to have been of better quality than the ordinary trade muskets ('fuzee', Dane gun, etc.).

¹²⁵ T 70/20. R. Lamber, factor on the 'Chineas' (1678); Tylleman, *ibid.*; T 70/22. Sir Dalby Thomas, Cape Coast Castle 16 Apr. 1709; the same, 8 May 1709.

¹²⁶ T 70/927. 'Invoice of the cost and charge of Goods shipped by the Committee of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa . . . and consigned to the Governor and Council of Cape Coast Castle . . .', London, 1 Jan. 1759; 'Invoice of the cost and charge of Goods [etc.]', London, 1 Mar. 1760; T 70/930. 'A List ordered by the Committee to be annexed to the present cargo of the Prince . . .', African Office, London, 28 Apr. 1795. The latter also refers to 'fine Tower proof gunpowder'. For a discussion of different kinds of gunpowder see G. White, 'Firearms in Africa: an introduction', in this number of *J. Afr. Hist.*, pp. 173–84.

¹²⁷ E. Hieke, 'Das Hambürgische Handelshaus Wm. O'Swald & Co. und der Beginn des deutschen Afrikahandels (1848–53)', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*. Dreissigster Band (Stuttgart, 1937), 349.

¹²⁸ Adams, op. cit. 260–1; Schnapper, op. cit. 116.

¹²⁹ Schnapper, *ibid.*, note 2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 117 note 2.

Africa since the less forceful explosion would not burst the weak barrels.¹³¹ Danish and Dutch gunpowders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries probably had a lower saltpetre content than the English powder, and this doubtless accounts for their popularity.

Müller comments that traders on the Gold Coast carefully examined gunpowder for dampness, the quality of the grains, etc. before purchasing it.¹³² This was necessary since the powder received by the European establishments on the Gold and Slave Coasts was often damaged. Sir Dalby Thomas remarked in a report that ships' captains should turn gunpowder barrels regularly during their voyages to West Africa in order to prevent the powder from clodding and the saltpetre from falling to the bottoms of the barrels, 'which very much prejudice the strength of the powder'.¹³³ Local traders also had to examine the quantity of powder in each barrel. Monrad stated that when the supply of gunpowder was short at the Danish establishments, the Danes economized by thickening the bottoms of the barrels, with the result that the quantity of powder per barrel was reduced, but not the price per barrel.¹³⁴

Because of the large numbers of malfunctioning firearms, blacksmiths on the Gold and Slave Coasts became adept at repairing them. Loyer wrote that the Assini blacksmiths could make a good musket from a bad one by ret tempering the lock. French merchants, he said, found this method of repairing locks incomparably better than any they had ever seen, and these guns, which the merchants had in fact sold because they would not fire, did not misfire after the Assini blacksmiths had mended them.¹³⁵ Whydah blacksmiths, Marchais observed, knew how to restore defective guns, to temper the locks and to braze the barrel, and because they could repair firearms so well, Whydah traders did not purchase as many as the Europeans wished.¹³⁶ An Elmina blacksmith repaired a flintlock musket with the following faults: '... the breech pin was out; the lower belt was off; the upper ring was off also; the barrel was out of its place'.¹³⁷ Repairs such as these were no doubt commonplace.

¹³¹ White, *ibid.* Marchais, *op. cit.* II, 278, remarks that the gunpowder used at Ardra in the early eighteenth century was inferior to European gunpowder which (presumably because of its higher saltpetre content) tended to burst the barrels of Ardra firearms.

¹³² Müller, *op. cit.* 262-3.

¹³³ T 70/22. 'Remarks on the Scheme of Trade' in 'Cape Coast Castle Warehouse Keeper Annot. for the month of Feb. 1708'.

¹³⁴ Monrad, *op. cit.* 288-9. Gunpowder was sold in barrels ranging from 10 to 100 lb. weight. The English sold gunpowder barrels in three sizes: 100 lb. (whole), 50 lb. (half) and 25 lb. (quarter). Powder was also sold in kegs and bags.

¹³⁵ R. Père Godefroy Loyer, *Relation du Voyage du Royaume D'Issyny, Côte d'Or, Païs de Guinée en Afrique* (Paris, 1714), 259. He adds that the Assini kept their muskets as bright as silver.

¹³⁶ Marchais, *op. cit.* II, 242-3.

¹³⁷ CO 879/4. Affairs of the Gold Coast, 1872 and 1873. Enclosure in No. 129. To the Administrator in Chief from D. P. Chalmers, Chief Magistrate, Cape Coast Castle, 13 July 1872. On Ewe and Dahomey blacksmiths see Klose, *op. cit.* 174-5, 262, and Commandant Grandin, *Le Dahomey à l'Assaut du Pays des Noirs*. 2 vols. (Paris, 1895), I, 125.

There are very few references to the manufacture of firearms and gunpowder on the Gold and Slave Coasts. Behanzin of Dahomey (1889–94) told a French mission in 1890 that he manufactured his own guns and gunpowder, a statement that was greeted with stark incredulity.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, the French expeditionary force of 1892 discovered at the Dahomey town of Kana what d'Albéca called 'un véritable atelier pyrotechnique' which contained a large quantity of gunpowder, projectiles, cartridge cases, cartridges of different kinds, signal rockets, electric batteries, and the tools necessary to make and repair the cartridges and to repair firearms.¹³⁹ At Abomey and Kana the French found three 'poudrières' containing a total of 5,000 kg. of gunpowder, part of which was kept in large hermetically sealed earthen and terra-cotta jars, and part in barrels.¹⁴⁰ Some of this powder may have been locally manufactured, for saltpetre was sold in Abomey markets.¹⁴¹

Brass barrel blunderbusses (*humu* or *ohum*) were said to have been produced in some Gold Coast states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁴² Indeed, various nineteenth-century accounts indicate that firearms were not only repaired by Asante blacksmiths, but that barrels, locks, and stocks were on occasion remade.¹⁴³ Gunpowder is said to have been manufactured in northern Ghana, presumably during the nineteenth century, and may in fact have been prepared in Asante as well.¹⁴⁴

Many writers give the impression that firearms were not properly maintained. Gunfire was regularly used, from the late seventeenth century

¹³⁸ 'Rapport du Commandant Audéoud sur la mission d'Abomey (1891).' 'L'Histoire Dahoméenne de la fin du XIX^e siècle à travers les Textes', *Etudes Dahoméennes*, ix (1953), 118. Goody states that Africans did not manufacture guns because they lacked the requisite level of craft skill in iron-working, J. Goody, 'Economy and Feudalism in Africa', *The Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, xxii, no. 3, (Dec. 1969), 398. However, cf. White, op. cit. 1.

¹³⁹ D'Albéca, op. cit. 218; F. Schelaumer, *Souvenirs de la Campagne du Dahomey* (Paris, n.d.), 232. Kana was in fact a manufacturing centre with 'numerous blacksmiths' forges'. See B. Cruickshank, 'Letters from the Gold Coast and Slave Coast with an Account of a Mission to the King of Dahomey' 'Gold Coast Papers, 1848', 52a (in SOAS library).

¹⁴⁰ D'Albéca, *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ FO 84/886. 'Facts Relating to my Second Visit to Abomey', op. cit., entries for 21 and 22 August 1851. White, op. cit. 174, states that sulphur need not be used in the preparation of gunpowder, 'but to omit it reduces the force of the musket charge by about half'.

¹⁴² A. A. Y. Kyerematen, *Panoply of Ghana* (Longmans, 1964), 39; according to a nineteenth-century report, Asante firearms were said to be of diverse form and quality. E. Plauchut, 'La Guerre des Achantis', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, XLIII^e Année, Seconde Période, Tome Cent Huitième (Paris, 1873), 856.

¹⁴³ Rask's early nineteenth-century compilation of Gã words and phrases included the term 'Bøssemager' (gunsmith). R. Rask, *Vejledning til Akra-sproget paa Kysten Guinea med et Tillaeg om Akuambuisk*, Kjøbenhavn, 1828).

On the manufacture of firearms in Benin and the Yoruba states see P. A. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, 3 vols (Oxford Univ. Press, 1926), iii, 825, J. F. Ade Ajayi and R. S. Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1964), 18 note 1; G. F. A. Ojo, *Yoruba Culture* (Univ. of London Press, 1966), 42–3; R. Smith, 'Yoruba Armament', *Journal of African History*, viii, 1 (1967), 101 note 42; Fawcckner quoted in Ling Roth, op. cit. 125.

¹⁴⁴ Goody, op. cit. 398 note 3.

onwards, to mark funerals, births, marriages, victory celebrations and numerous other events, and on such occasions gun barrels tended to burst. This was attributed as much to weak barrels as to the fact that muskets were too heavily charged with gunpowder.¹⁴⁵ Bowdich saw in Kumasi muskets with cordage wrapped around their barrels to prevent them from bursting during firing.¹⁴⁶ Such weapons may have been owned by individuals, and not have been state property. On the other hand, the flintlocks decorated with gold and cowrie shells and equipped with tin or leather coverings to protect the lock mechanisms from rain may have been supplied by the Asante state.¹⁴⁷ In Dahomey, Lafitte wrote, that if a musket had been purchased by a soldier, the state was not concerned about its maintenance, but if the state gave a gun to a soldier it was regularly and meticulously inspected, and the least negligence in the care of the weapon meant a heavy fine. In the course of a few years a soldier might pay twice the original price of the musket in fines; nevertheless the musket would remain the property of the state.¹⁴⁸

III. FIREARMS AND WARFARE

The use of firearms was not restricted to warfare; indeed, guns appear to have been more extensively utilized in various social and economic activities.¹⁴⁹ However, it was as a new form of military technology that guns appear dramatically important. Four kinds of infantry can be distinguished in the armies of the seventeenth century coastal Gold Coast states: (1) archers, (2) spearmen with shields, (3) swordsmen with battle-axes, and (4) musketeers, who first appeared in small numbers in the 1620s and 1630s.¹⁵⁰ It was not until the 1680s and 1690s, with the

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Marchais, op. cit. II, 278, H. F. Tengbergen, *Verhaal van den Reistogt en Expeditie naar de Nederlandsche Bezittingen ter Westkust van Afrika (Kust van Guinea)*, ('S-Gravenhage, 1839), 70, and H. Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa* (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1967 new impression), 60 note. ¹⁴⁶ Bowdich, op. cit. 286.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 37; Capt. H. J. Biss, *The Relief of Kumasi* (London, 1901), 142.

¹⁴⁸ M. L'Abbé Lafitte, *Le Dahomé. Souvenirs de Voyage et de Mission* (Tours, 1880 5th ed.), 106. In the nineteenth century the government provided each soldier with arms and ammunition. J. A. Skertchly, *Dahomey as it is* (London, 1874), 447.

¹⁴⁹ Firearms were used in hunting and in protecting crops from wild animals. See, e.g., Müller, op. cit. 242-3, Barbot, op. cit. 207, 209, 218, Rask, op. cit. 237, and Monrad, op. cit. 124-25, 147. They were also employed during festive and commemorative occasions. J. Swanzy stated in 1816 that not one barrel of gunpowder in a 1,000 was consumed on the Gold Coast for war, but gunpowder was 'almost wholly expended in amusement and funeral customs.' *British Parliamentary Papers. Reports from Select Committees . . . on the State of the Settlements and Forts on the Coast of Africa (1801-17). Colonies Africa I.* (Shannon, Ireland, 1968), 29-30. Cruickshank, op. cit. 84 a, estimated that 1,500 to 2,000 lbs. of gunpowder were expended during his visit to Abomey during various ceremonies, 'and at all seasons this saluting is going on'.

¹⁵⁰ De Marees, op. cit. 90-3, 96-7; Brun, op. cit. 60-2; Bellefond, op. cit. 254; Müller, op. cit. 126-36, 139; Dapper, op. cit. 301-2; von Groben, op. cit. 60; Bosman, op. cit. 185-7; Barbot, op. cit. 295; Römer, op. cit. 119. On the early use of musketeers see p. 189 above. Gold Coast armies did not possess cavalry.

enormous expansion of the firearms trade, that the four were reduced to one main type armed with firearm and sword; however spearmen, but significantly not archers, continued to appear in some coastal armies in the early eighteenth century.¹⁵¹ In the armies of the forest states the musketeer emerged as the principal military arm in the course of the 1690s and the first quarter of the eighteenth century, although archers still played a significant tactical role in battle, while the spearmen ceased to exist as a military factor.¹⁵²

According to Brun, when a Gold Coast army assumed battle array, every five soldiers formed a single rank.¹⁵³ A Fante army of 1653 was divided into four 'groot troups', each presumably many ranks deep, and each led by its particular commander, who had under him subordinate leaders. The army itself was commanded by 'Adonie, captain of the mansebos'.¹⁵⁴ The line of battle was a line of dense columns or masses: 'each commander has his men close together in a sort of crowd in the midst of which he is generally to be found'.¹⁵⁵ This formation, a line of compact masses, was easily assumed from the column of march, which was headed by the *Braffo*, the commander-in-chief of the army and the first to charge in battle, and his men, followed by the subordinate army leaders and their troops.¹⁵⁶ The spearmen were the first to go into action. The archers then shot off their arrows, and this was followed by a charge led by the *Braffo*, and hand-to-hand combat with swords, knife, and battle-axe.¹⁵⁷ However, the action was almost desultory in character. The army commander who had led the charge did not have effective control of the battlefield; thus the movements of the soldiers were not co-ordinated, and engagements tended to resolve themselves into hundreds of hand-to-hand encounters. Bosman writes that

they attack the enemy man for man or one heap of men against another; and some of their commanders seeing their brother officers furiously attacked, and somewhat put to it, choose rather to run [away], and that frequently before they had stroke one stroak, or stood so much as one brush . . .¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ Tylleman, op. cit. 63-4, 68-9, 74, 80, 90, 97; Loyer, op. cit. 111, 124, 259, 260; Rask, op. cit. 90-1, 235, 249-50. As early as the 1660s the Fetu consisted mainly of spearmen, swordsmen and musketeers, while the Elminas in the same period had muskets and spears. Müller, op. cit. 135-6 and p. 12 above. See also von Gröben, op. cit. 60, 61, 75, and Bosman, op. cit. 186.

¹⁵² 'Phillips' Voyage to Guinea' in Astley, op. cit. II, 410-11; von Gröben, op. cit. 87; Tylleman, op. cit. 129-30; Rask, op. cit. 155, 219; Bosman, op. cit. 75-6; Barbot, op. cit. 186. On archers in Akwamu and Aowin see Bosman, op. cit. 79, 186, and Barbot, op. cit. 263. See also note 100 above. On the early eighteenth century demand for firearms by inland people see p. 199 above, and for Aowin and Asante trade in guns see T70/22. J. Carter, Dixcove, 1 Mar. 1708; Sir Dalby Thomas, Cape Coast Castle, 8 May 1709.

¹⁵³ Brun, op. cit. 61-2.

¹⁵⁴ 'Journaal gehouden by my Louys Dammaert . . .' op. cit. entries for 13 May and 3 and 4 Oct. 1653. The *mansebos* or *manseros* were the 'young men' (*mmerantse*). See p. 211 below.

¹⁵⁵ Müller, op. cit. 137; Bosman, op. cit. 182.

¹⁵⁶ Müller, op. cit. 113, 136-7; Bosman, op. cit. 194.

¹⁵⁷ Brun, *ibid.*; Bellefond, op. cit. 254-5.

¹⁵⁸ Bosman, op. cit. 182.

In the late seventeenth century, musketeers were deployed as skirmishers. They formed the first line of battle and fought in a loose, dispersed order. After firing, Bosman writes, they 'run away as fast as they can . . . get to their own army as soon as possible, in order to load their arms and fall on again'.¹⁵⁹ In the early eighteenth century the coastal armies of the Gold Coast fought in two lines, each apparently several ranks deep, with the musketeers in the first line and spearmen and swordsmen in the second.¹⁶⁰ Firearms, however, made shallow formations imperative.

When most or all coastal armies were equipped with guns, skirmish tactics were adopted. Soldiers in extended order advanced towards the enemy under cover of vegetation, fired, retreated to reload, and then ran forward again. Among other things this meant that hand-to-hand combat was less common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than in the seventeenth century.¹⁶¹

To those unaccustomed to them in the mid-seventeenth century, Gold Coast muskets were 'Teuffels-Werk', because powder and ball could kill, but unlike arrows could not be seen.¹⁶² Four modes of warfare existed on the Gold Coast: (1) ambushes, (2) surprise dawn and night attacks on towns and villages, (3) encounters between small parties of soldiers, and (4) pitched battles between armies which often numbered several thousands.¹⁶³ It was doubtless the effectiveness of muskets in ambushes and surprise attacks rather than in pitched battles, the least common form of warfare in the seventeenth century, that led the Fetu to consider the musket their most useful weapon.¹⁶⁴ Matchlock muskets, in fact, could prove unreliable on the battlefield. In 1660, when the Fetu and Abrambu armies met in battle, rain extinguished the matches on the Abrambu matchlocks which therefore could not be used; and the Abrambu were soundly defeated.¹⁶⁵ The technical and other shortcomings of the matchlock musket probably account for its replacement in the 1680s and 1690s by the flintlock.¹⁶⁶

In the late seventeenth century, the coastal peoples were considered very good shooters and very adept users of the musket.¹⁶⁷ Yet in spite of their early acquaintance with the gun, the coastal people succumbed to the military power of inland states like Akwamu and, later, Asante. Several factors account for this, two of which can be noted here. First,

¹⁵⁹ Bosman, 182 and 184; see also Bellefond, op. cit. 254; Barbot, op. cit. 295.

¹⁶⁰ Marchais, op. cit. 1, 366.

¹⁶¹ Rask, op. cit. 89-90; de Marée, op. cit. 11, 264-5; Monrad, op. cit. 119-20; van Doren, op. cit. 153.

¹⁶² M. Hemmersam, *Reise nach Guinea und Brasilien 1639-1645, Reisebeschreibungen von Deutsche Beamten und Krigsleuten im Dienst der Niederländischen West- und Ost Indischen Kompagnie 1602-1797*, 13 vols. Ed. S. P. L'Honoré Naber (Martinus Nijhoff, Haag, 1930-2) 1, 56; de Marée, op. cit. 11, 266.

¹⁶³ Bellefond, op. cit. 259-60; Müller, op. cit. 137; 'Phillip's Voyage to Guinea, 1693', op. cit. 410. ¹⁶⁴ Müller, op. cit. 127, also 137. ¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 60. ¹⁶⁶ See 22 above.

¹⁶⁷ Bosman, op. cit. 27, 184. A Brandenburg official, Niemann, wrote in 1684 that 'Sie sind ganz sicher im Schiessen und rasch im Gewehrladen . . .'. Quoted in Schück, op. cit. 328.

the armies of the inland states had greater firepower in the form of archers and musketeers, while the coastal states, at least until the early eighteenth century, relied on spearmen and musketeers; second, an early nineteenth century observer wrote, the Asante (and perhaps the Akwamu as well) always fought in 'serried ranks' (*gesloten gelederen*), with the result that the places of dead and wounded soldiers were taken by fresh replacements; but among the coastal armies each tactical unit fought separately in dispersed skirmishing order.¹⁶⁸ Pitched battles seem to have become more common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the centralized battle order of the Asante was probably more disposed to this type of warfare than the somewhat decentralized skirmishing array of the coastal armies.

Akwamu is credited with having introduced in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century a politico-military form of government in which the heads of clans (the *abusuahenfo*) were replaced by military commanders, the *Benkumhene*, the *Nifahene*, the *Adontenhene*, etc., as politico-administrative officials in the state.¹⁶⁹ A similar form of political organization existed in early seventeenth century Denkyira, where the people were divided for political and military reasons into three groups: the *Akumati* or *Nifa*, the *Kyeremfen* or *Benkum* and the *Agona Adontendom* or the vanguard. Each of these divisions was under a *Safohene* or military commander.¹⁷⁰ In the 1640s there are Dutch references to the 'Cocoroties' (or 'Cocoritische') and the 'Crisacqueesche' of 'Akany'.¹⁷¹ Both names were probably politico-military designations similar to the *Benkum* of Akwamu and the *Akumati* of Denkyira, and they indicate that militarization of the political structure of some inland Gold Coast states had already been achieved by the mid-seventeenth century. On the coast this process also occurred in several states, e.g. in Fanti by the 1650s and in Assini by the 1690s.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ De Marée, op. cit. II, 264–5. The Asante employed the countermarch, i.e. firing by successive ranks, and they made use of loaders. Biss, op. cit. 59; Major F. Myatt, *The Golden Stool. An Account of the Ashanti War of 1900* (London, 1966), 89.

¹⁶⁹ E. L. R. Meyerowitz, *The Sacred State of the Akan* (London, 1951), 33–4; I. Wilks, 'Akwamu 1650–1750. A Study of the Rise and Fall of a West African Empire', unpublished M.A. Thesis. (Univ. College of North Wales, Bangor, 1959), 60–2. Cf. Römer, op. cit. 132–3; 'The Negroes believe that this bad custom (i.e. attaching the heads of slain enemy rulers to drums) is not over 100 years old among them, and that the Akwamu and their neighbours were the first to do this.' This custom may, perhaps, be associated with the political changes that occurred in Akwamu. See also Tylleman, op. cit. 104–5 and 'Relation du Sr. Du Casse sur son Voyage de Guinée avec "La Tempeste" en 1687 et 1688' in Roussier, op. cit. 14.

¹⁷⁰ J. K. Kumah, 'The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Denkyira', *GNQ* no. 9 (1966), 34.

¹⁷¹ OWIC 58. (J. Ruychaver), 't Casteel de Myna, 15 Nov. 1642; *Vijf Dagregisters* . . . op. cit. 85 and note 4.

¹⁷² See e.g. 'Journal gehovden by my Loyus Dammaert . . .' op. cit. entries for 3 and 4 Oct. 1653 where there are references to two Fante officials: 'Captain of the *Caboseros*' and 'Captain of the *Mancebos*'. For Assini see 'Extrait du Journal du Sieur Tibierge Principal Commis de la Compagnie de Guinée sur le Vaisseau "Le Pont d'Or" au Voyage de l'Année 1692' in Roussier, op. cit. 63–4 and Loyer, op. cit. 124–5, 260–1.

The *asafo* system formed the basis of the military organization of the coastal and inland states. Each town or village was divided into one or more quarters or companies (*asafo*), to which the young men (*mmerantse*) of the community belonged, and each company had its ranked officers, who were responsible for the affairs of their respective companies in times of peace and war.¹⁷³ In 1653 Kormantine was divided into four companies, three of which were 'Incom', 'Bantiersche' and 'Inconise', while the town of Elmina had three, one of which was referred to as 'Abcou' (*Ankobia?*).¹⁷⁴ By 1763 Elmina had seven companies, which were listed as 'Apenjafoe', 'Ancobia', 'Akim', 'Encoetjo', 'Abece', 'Aladdie', and 'Janpa'.¹⁷⁵ Anomabu had six companies: 'Bendafoe', 'Penancore', 'Ebroom', 'Ebirim', 'Eisham' and 'Chibbafoe', and Abura (Abra) had five: 'Bentafoo', the first regiment of Abura, 'Denkra', the second regiment, 'Oorampi', the third regiment, 'Ancobia', the fourth regiment, and 'Rysamsor', the fifth regiment, all of which were under the charge of 'the Captain-General of Abra'.¹⁷⁶ The nineteenth century military of Denkyira is an example of how companies were distributed among the various army divisions: the left wing (*Abwakwaman*) consisted of five companies, the centre (*Adamtsinfo*) of six, the right wing (*Kronkohin*) of thirteen and the rearguard (*Gyasifo*) of fourteen.¹⁷⁷

Asante adopted the Akwamu military organization in the late seventeenth century, and in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries developed a more complex military system than any other Gold Coast state. Among other things this system included a corps of full-time military specialists such as the *Anantahene* and the *Nkarawahene*, both of whom first appeared during the reign of Opoku Ware (c. 1720–50).¹⁷⁸ The *Anantahene* was head of the royal arms and 'chief of the long (double-barrelled) guns', and the *Nkarawahene* was the 'chief of the cap guns'. Both offices are indicative of the importance of firearms in the Asante army from the early eighteenth century onwards.

Firearms also played an important role in the Dahomey and Whydah

¹⁷³ Bosman, op. cit. 119, 164–5, 178–80; Rask, op. cit. 90; Monrad, op. cit. 69, 72, 74; Swanzy (1850), op. cit. 61; Doorman, op. cit. 421. See also A. Ffoulkes, 'The Company System in Cape Coast Castle', *Journal of the African Society*, III (1907–8), J. C. de Graft Johnson, 'The Fanti Asafu', *Africa* 5 (1932), and J. B. Christensen, *Double Descent Among the Fanti* (New Haven, 1954), 107–17. In the vocabulary list of Müller, op. cit. Chapt. XV, a soldier is called 'Assaffu'. See also the article by Datta and Porter in this number of the *Journal*.

¹⁷⁴ 'Journaal gehouden by my Louys Dammaert . . .' op. cit. entry for 19 Feb. 1653; *Vijf Dagregisters* . . . op. cit. 83, 84, 85.

¹⁷⁵ NBKG 299. 'Verklaring der Koningen, Terre Grandes en Vaandrighs uyt de Seeven Quartieren van Elmina aangaande 't op trekken naar Axim' 2 Oct. 1763 (no. 74).

¹⁷⁶ T 70/1695. 'Names of those that took the oath etc. at Cape Coast Castle, Feb. 6, 1753, and signed the recognition'; T 70/989. Annamaboe Fort (Day Book) . . . Accounts for the Months of Nov. and Dec. 1770, entry for 25 Dec. 1770.

¹⁷⁷ Ffoulkes, op. cit. 264.

¹⁷⁸ 'Akwamu Stool History', IAS acc. no. 38, 'Ananta Stool History', IAS acc. no. AS 3, 'Nkarawa Stool History', IAS acc. no. AS 108, Institute of African Studies, Univ. of Ghana, Legon.

kingdoms, where they were employed not only in war but also during festive and ceremonial occasions.¹⁷⁹ From the 1680s onwards musketeers were to be found in the Whydah army, but they never really replaced archers, spearmen, and swordsmen; nevertheless it was the gun, Marchais noted, which gave the Whydah king a military advantage over his neighbours.¹⁸⁰

The military organization of the Whydah kingdom differed from that of the Gold Coast states. The kingdom, in the early eighteenth century, was divided into 26 provinces, the heads or governors of which were commanders in times of war.¹⁸¹ The governors were expected to arm their men, and on occasion the Whydah king supplied his troops with gunpowder and shot.¹⁸² 'Assou', a prince, provincial governor and caboceer of the French fort at Whydah, could field 5–600 men and four cannon given to him by the French; another governor commanded 2,000 men, while others could arm 100, 200 or more men.¹⁸³ There were also military specialists such as the Captain of the King's Musketeers and a small corps of professional soldiers.¹⁸⁴

The battle order of the Whydah troops was similar to that of seventeenth and early eighteenth century Gold Coast armies; that is, it was a line of compact masses or 'gros pelotons', as Marchais called them, each under its respective commander.¹⁸⁵ These 'pelotons' were divided into smaller military units.¹⁸⁶ At the head of each 'peloton' was the flagbearer with a flag, and each commander had a large umbrella; the army was divided into right and left wings and centre.¹⁸⁷ The musketeers fought in the front ranks of the army, but unlike those on the Gold Coast not in skirmishing order. They were the first to go into action, followed by the archers, the army then charged, during which the spearmen threw their weapons, and the action was climaxed by hand-to-hand combat with swords, clubs, axes, and knives.¹⁸⁸ Firearms would therefore seem to have played a less decisive role in warfare in Whydah than in the Gold Coast states.

¹⁷⁹ For Whydah see Marchais, *op. cit.* II, 47, 62, 194, 195, 196, 268; for Dahomey see note 149 above and [Pruneau de Pommegorge], *op. cit.* 167, 174–5, 181.

¹⁸⁰ Tylleman, *op. cit.* 129; Bosman, *op. cit.* 396; Mr N., *op. cit.* 43; Marchais, *op. cit.* II, 238, 240, 243–4, 245. Cf. also J. Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West Indies* (London, 1737 2nd. ed.), 111. Bosman, *op. cit.* 395–6 and Tylleman, *op. cit.* 129–30, state that Whydah obtained many of its musketeers from Akwamu.

¹⁸¹ Mr N., *op. cit.* 44; Marchais, *op. cit.* II, 14–15, 235, 237.

¹⁸² Marchais, *ibid.* 235. Bosman, *op. cit.* 347, refers to a Whydah official who had 2,000 lb. of gunpowder in his house, presumably for distribution to his soldiers.

¹⁸³ Bosman, *op. cit.* 345; Mr N., *op. cit.* 44–5 and note; Marchais, *op. cit.* II, 14, 55, 268.

¹⁸⁴ Marchais, *ibid.* 15; T 70/54, From Wm. Bailie, Williams Fort, to Cape Coast Castle, 10 May 1720. Cf. Rask, *op. cit.* 207–8.

¹⁸⁵ Marchais, *op. cit.* II, 237. Cf. Mr N., *op. cit.* 45. The latter, 46, states that couriers attached to the Whydah army rode on horses.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Marchais, *op. cit.* II, 194, who refers to a captain with his 40 musketeers.

¹⁸⁷ [Pruneau de Pommegorge], *op. cit.* 225–6. The latter describes a Popo army of 1763, but his description is applicable to the Whydah army of the early eighteenth century. Cf. Mr N., *op. cit.* 46–7.

¹⁸⁸ Marchais, *op. cit.* II, 238.

However, in the Dahomey army musketeers were the decisive infantry arm. In the nineteenth century, the Dahomey army consisted of three distinct parts: (1) the royal guard, which included the Amazons or women soldiers, constituted the standing army; (2) the guards or retainers of the caboceers or officials, and (3) the *levées*, those who were 'conscripted' in time of war.¹⁸⁹ The army numbered about 15,000 and was divided into right, left, centre and reserve, and each of these was further subdivided into 'companies' and 'platoons'; in addition there was a corps of war, or military officers responsible for the affairs of the army.¹⁹⁰

The regular Dahomey troops were distinguished by their skill in war. Foa stated that seven distinct movements were required to load a Dane gun, an operation which took an Amazon 30 seconds and a Dahomean male soldier 50 seconds to complete.¹⁹¹ Dahomey military units were regularly drilled and acted 'in concert'; thus they fired on command, employed the countermarch (i.e. firing by ranks), formed extended lines from deep columns and vice versa, and used such tactics as covering fire, frontal attacks and flanking movements.¹⁹²

In the late nineteenth century, Dahomey had a large variety of weapons. These included: Chassepot model 1866, Fusil model 1867, Dreyse, Mauser model 1871, Enfield-Snider model 1867, Wanzel, Verndl, Peabody, Winchester, Spencer, Albini, Robert Jones carbine, French musketoon 1882, mitrailleuse Reffye 1867, cannon of different kinds, mortars as well as the Dane gun and the blunderbuss.¹⁹³ Thus the Dahomey kingdom at this time, with its highly specialized military organization and great variety of guns, might be said to represent the climax of the firearms trade.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ 'Rapport du Commandant Audéoud...' op. cit. 115-17. See also J. Bayol, 'Les Forces Militaires Actuelles du Dahomey', *Revue Scientifique*, XLIX (Paris, 1892).

¹⁹⁰ Skertchly, op. cit. 444-7; Bayol, op. cit. 520-1, 522; E. Foa, *Le Dahomey* (Paris, 1895), 258-9; Brunet et Giethlen, *Dahomey et Dependences* (Paris, 1900), 110-11.

¹⁹¹ Foa, op. cit. 259-60. He adds that a European soldier using the 'fusil Gras' could fire 10-15 times within this period. However, Skertchly, op. cit. 126, did not think much of the Dahomey soldiers as marksmen.

¹⁹² See e.g. Cruickshank, op. cit. 68a-8b, 69a, 73a; Forbes, op. cit. 11, 60, 123-4; Foa, op. cit. 259; CO 879-18, Enclosure no. 2. 'Notes of a journey from Lagos by lagoon to the Popo country, and from Whydah to Dahomey, in the interests of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, by the Rev. John Milum, from Nov. 13th., 1880 to Jan. 15th 1881.'; L. Savinhiac, 'La Guerre au Dahomey', *Le Spectateur Militaire*, 51ème série. 1 (Paris, 1892), 39-40, 41-2.

¹⁹³ D'Albéca, op. cit. 216-17. There was ammunition for all of these arms. See *ibid.* 44 note 1, 215-18 and Brunet et Giethlen, op. cit. 140. See also p. 206 above.

¹⁹⁴ I wish to thank the Central Research Fund, University of London, for providing me with a grant to enable me to carry out research in the Netherlands. I am also grateful to Dr Hart of the *Gemeente Archief*, Amsterdam, for his invaluable assistance.